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## SUICIDE ENGLISH

Should there be any difference drawn between the English given by the commercial or technical school and that given by the classical school? Actual practice is extremely diverse. Some high schools are giving two English courses to others than classical students. One full four-year course is given in academic English and an extra course in "business," or "industrial," or "technical" English according to the line of study followed by the student. Some few schools follow the same outline in teaching English in all the courses. The majority of schools use the same outline in all courses for a year or two, and then differentiate. The basic idea of the first and second group is the same, viz., that no successful special English course is possible until ordinary English is well mastered; but while the first group finds time for the extra course, the second group does not. The third group believes in the special course at any cost, and so sacrifices from one to three years from the regular course.

The prodigious difference between the first two groups and the last is in what they consider a complete general English course. The first two demand that not only grammatical composition and oral delivery be practiced but also that a broad reading habit—a taste for and appreciation of good literature—be acquired. This reading habit is expected not so much to aid the student financially, as it is to enlarge his mental powers to the enjoyment of the efforts of those who follow a profession other than his own. The man who enjoys good books, good music, and good pictures has a deeper vision than has the follower of dime novels, ragtime music, and comic newspaper supplements. His deeper vision makes him more thoughtful, and his thoughtfulness makes him a better citizen. No study other than that of English can develop a person's intellect in so many directions.

Is there then any place for the specialized English course? Decidedly yes! By all means give it a place, but do not displace the irreplaceable straight English. It is better to have the technical or business English course parallel the last year or two of the ordinary English course, but if this is not possible, and the special course must replace the general, if it is to be given at all, it should not come before the end of the third year, and then only after the previous time has been filled with the most comprehensive study of English in all its points.

The need of the specialized course is evident. Let us think of business English. Let us think of two letters, a personal, informal letter from one friend to another, and the urging, formal letter from seller to buyer. Both types are invaluable to society, yet the difference is more

than one of construction; the difference is a result of and dates back to the beginning of the writer's training. The business letter must be primarily brief, and secondly complete. Completion may be left, however, for "follow-up" letters, or interviews. The personal, other type must be first of all complete, while brevity, though desirable, is a far inferior factor. Completeness can be mastered only by the student of classical English. Brevity is of real necessity only in business use, and is acquired by the student of the specialized English course.

To sum up, the ability to appreciate really good things is not too generously scattered among human beings. There is much need for the development of American minds along the more classical lines. Remember what Harvard's Professor Palmer said about the final test of a man's culture being in the use he makes of his mother-tongue. In our dash for practicality we overlook too many other things. Only the course in straight English may be depended upon to develop a taste for good literature. A course in business English means an English course changed slightly to adapt it to business conditions. Its foundation should be the solid anchorage of a broad knowledge of correct English grammar and English writings.

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#### WHAT WE ARE COMING TO

*To the Editor of the "English Journal":*

Say listen! I saw in a book where it said we had ought to take the evolutionary view of language; being as what is vulgar English today may be classical English tomorrow, we hadn't ought to say too positively that anything is perfectly all right, nor be afraid of everything contrary to Woolley. But somehow I can't hardly reconcile myself to that point of view. It seems like I just can't bear to think of all educated people talking like our college students do. It's just terrible to think that that to which we are coming is like this:

Speak the speech, I pray you, like I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, like many of your players do, I'd have just as lief the town crier had of spoken my lines. Too, you better not saw the air too much with your hand, thus.

I break off, gasping. We *shall* not (I realize) be able to hinder or divert the march of evolution; but "Oh, it offends me to the soul!"

Yours very truly,

LAWRENCE, KANSAS

JOSEPHINE M. BURNHAM